

MICAH SCHIPPA — *WILDFONG*

NEGATIVE ECSTASIES

Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago US
24 February, 2024

Negative Ecstasies (*Trois études contre l'État policier fasciste*) is a sculptural composition for seven vocalists. The work, a sort of anti-tone poem, is built around motifs of despair in relation to labor, industrialism, gore-capitalism, and the way these systems stress the subjects they encounter. Configured in response to the interior floor plan of the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, the score is tangentially based on the history and architecture of The Midland Building ("The Great Central Market"), the suicidal poetry of Foxconn factory worker Xu Lizhi, and historic union, labor, and coal mining songs. A flickering light might be a trill, a staircase might be a descention or ascension of notes, where two walls meet might be a pulse between two notes, etc. In this way, the performers and the viewers experience the improvisational ensemble spatially, and never in the same configuration. The dead are sculptures that sing. ONE MUST BE PASSED OVER BY AIRCRAFT.

The body of the self-murderer and everything that comes in contact with it possess extraordinary magical powers. The iron beam a man hangs himself from can be melted down to make healing rings. Scraps of his clothing are rubbed on livestock to render them fertile and healthy. In Scotland, to cure epilepsy, the ill are made to drink from a suicide's skull.—from Tractatus Logico-Suicidalis: On Killing Oneself by Hermann Burger, translated by Adrian Nathan West

Performed by Courtney Mackedanz, Kim Upstill, Lizz Smith, Max Buzone, Micah Schippa-Wildfong, Noël Morical, and Ulysses Wildfong

Audio engineering and technical support by Bonita Kaze, Haruhi Kobayashi, Matthew Test, Rafael Loza, and Sam Clapp

Photographs by Micah Schippa-Wildfong, Jack Schneider, and Drew Angle



ALL FISH IN THE NIGHT BECOME BIRDS

romance, Pittsburgh US
8 June — 14 July, 2024

In all fish in the night become birds, Micah Schippa-Wildfong puts forward the proposition of “an exhibition as a score for a film.” Here, what is supposed to enhance the emotion of a narrative comes into focus as a set of material conditions by which a series of sculptures and ambient changes to the gallery unfold. Most recently turning their attention to live performance in their practice, Schippa-Wildfong has conceived of these objects, surfaces, and architectural elements as an open system in which they can short-circuit, liquify, and dissipate the “rational” ways we desire for inorganic objects and human beings to behave.

Throughout the show, different forms of registering and recording what seems evanescent (instructions for a performance based on slow, simple movements of “frozen intimacy” like embracing while sleeping or hand-holding; gallery windows fogged with industrially produced imitation snow interacting with air and moisture) annotate the occurrence of change without arrest. Or even, hasten it as in Hans Haacke’s Condensation Cube (1963-78), a resonant sculpture comprised of an acrylic cube filled with water as a study of interacting systems via surrounding temperature, analogous to the conditions by which we move in the world, and by which the world’s structures move us. But Schippa-Wildfong’s decomposing forms and poetics, such as a corpse-like motorcycle engine at rest in a vessel of chemicals approximating human tears, or a flute the artist’s mother played when she was their age, dissolved in a mixture akin to stomach acid, are less about physiological and institutional phenomena, or conversely about a kind of supernatural animism, than questions of how human meaning both cracks and accumulates in the presence of inevitable “disorder” over time: beige and rusted and yellowing, with the moisture of emotional and psychological transmission between bodies and the things we make to try and extend ourselves (or each other) beyond our limits. Usurped from the context of utility and instruments of “power,” stripped of the ability to do things, tired and corroded, Schippa-Wildfong’s skeletal apparatuses and theater of their attenuated choreography enact feelings of “absence or weakness of agency” where “under conditions of ‘liquidity’ everything could happen yet nothing can be done with confidence and certainty,” as Zygmunt Bauman writes in *Liquid Modernity* (1999). Or as the artist describes: “What, in the end, stays written, whether by notes or by word, of our presence, if not dust and vapor. In the floating decay of metal and acid there is so much more than just our minds or their breaking down.” From the wider sickness of bodies treated as containers, machines, or motors for productive activity, to the compulsions of the artist’s grandfather to amass a collection of technological mechanisms as a manifestation of his mental illness, Schippa-Wildfong distinctively seems to ask: what would it look like, if decay and loss weren’t something to romanticize or fear, but to simply coexist with—not in order to suppress the reality of it, but to sit with it, feel through it, and, thus, process it more thoroughly? Maybe they would be dancers, or a kind of spectral metronome in the form of fluorescent tube lights flickering, in sync to a timer without the legibility of a clock, melting between “real” and theatrical and imperceptible measures. In the artist’s words, “Only from THE incomprehensible do I feel affinity, or love, or the possibility of either, only in that constellation of indeterminacies.”

—text by Margaret Kross

Why do you weep now?
I remember.
Tell what else you remember.
The swan was mutilated.

* *Envoi*

And I came to where was nothing but drowning
and more drowning, and saw to where the sea—

besides flesh—was, as well, littered with boats,
how each was blue but trimmed with white, to each
a name I didn't know and then, recalling,
did. And ignoring the flesh that, burning, gives
more stink than heat, I dragged what boats I could
to the shore and piled them severally in a tree-
less space, and lit a fire that didn't take
at first—the wood was wet—and then, helped by
the wind, became a blaze so high the sea
itself, along with the bodies in it, seemed
to burn. I watched as each boat fell to flame:
Vincent and Matthew and, last, what bore your name.
—Carl Phillips

I

Activities for Orchestra / Poisoning Infinity — choreographic score for two dancers, framed 9 x 11 x 1, 2024

II

as building from a limit / (suffers / even after metamorphosis / There is a point at the center of a bird — Zongshen Dual Sport Motorcycle 200CC engine dissolved in lacrimal solution (false tears formulated by the artist), vitrine, 26 x 28 x 28, 2024. Title of the piece from a poem by Elizabeth Willis.

III

ECONOMY OF RELATION — flute last played by mother of the artist, previously dissolved in gastric solution (false stomach acid formulated by the artist), 26.5 x 2.5 x 2.25, 2024

IV

The mutilation of a swan. The mass production of bells. — image of Ulysses Wildfong performing choreographic work of the same title dissolved in liquid fog, Borgova 500W fog machine, found copy of “The Battle for Warsaw”, two mass produced metronomes from the collection of the artist, found bird form bell, dimensions variable, 2024

V

These flutes are very pleasant to work with and repairing them is a pleasure. They are pleasant to hold in your hands and they obey the master. They are not at all capricious. I speak as a master with 33 years of experience. — 5 fluorescent lights, electrical timers each set to intervals of 15-20 seconds (the amount of time the brain can function without blood flow, the time it takes to deseed a pomegranate, or to tie shoes), mass produced bells from the collection of the artist previously used in “Sequence for fish processing vessel” performance, theater curtains, false snow, all the birds of Pittsburgh, all the fish of the Allegheny, salt, dimensions variable, 2024

VI

The collecting of horse meat. Marrying one's sweetheart. Everyday chores. — torn page from “The Battle of Warsaw” depicting everyday life and its distortion during wartime, steel, plexiglass 1 x 1 x 1, 2024

CIVILIZATION OF HAPPINESS

Mickey, Chicago US
13 September — 10 November, 2024

1.

3rd September, 1775, the surgeon John Hunter dissects an electric eel. He will discover the electrophysiology of the knifefish, how it generates its electric field and how it uses this field to sense its surroundings and kill its prey. Also in 1775, the American physician and politician Hugh Williamson, who had studied with Hunter, presented a paper "Experiments and observations on the Gymnotus Electricus, or electric eel" at the Royal Society. He reported a series of experiments, such as "7. In order to discover whether the eel killed those fish by an emission of the same [electrical] fluid with which he affected my hand when I had touched him, I put my hand into the water, at some distance from the eel; another knife-fish was thrown into the water; the eel swam up to it ... [and] gave it a shock, by which it instantly turned up its belly, and continued motionless; at that very instant I felt such a sensation in the joints of my fingers as in experiment 4." Their research would eventually be used to develop the electric battery.

2.

On the first Sunday of 1969 Robert Barry went to Central Park with four capsules of radioactive material in his pocket. He had ordered them from a scientific supply catalog, choosing an isotope of his namesake, barium-133, the only one of twenty-two known isotopes of the element that does not dangerously decay within seconds or minutes. He walked to the Great Lawn behind the Metropolitan Museum of Art and, in two locations there, inconspicuously buried the capsules. He then snapped a quick photograph at each of the sites, leaving behind what he called 0.5 Microcurie Radiation Installation.¹

3.

"Might not the dancers be real puppets, moved by strings, or better still, self propelled by means of a precise mechanism, almost free of human intervention, at most directed by remote control?"² In an empty music hall a man begins to conduct an orchestra for rehearsal. Down the hill slightly, in another part of the city, a wedding assembles. The bride is solemn despite her family gathering around her. Tears wash over the lifeless statue of her body. Unaffiliated birds fly above the storehouse of her wedding. It is tradition that she will receive a white ceramic bell filled with rice and flour, which the groom's mother will later destroy in front of her. The train engine, racing as the bride's heart, pulls into the station. It is to deliver people and musical supplies. The dead horses whose hair was used to make the bows beneath which the strings have now broken, delaying the rehearsal, all trembling, and the army, now amassing around the city, administered, also from a great distance, begin their evening drills. And further on there is a hunting party. Foxes running in the snow generate an electric field. Dancers, over-articulating their limbs, generate an electric field. We have kissed beneath these paintings. Not far off, yet deep at sea, there is the factory vessel, to which the bride writes her letters. She has secretly fallen in love with the ship. Thousands of herring a day it will harvest, and be brought back to the mainland, distributed into the hungering mouths of Europe. The migratory patterns of the herring are said to have shaped the settlement, and therefore the cultures, of the continent. Herring are spotted when their shoals send up a mass of shimmer beneath the water, like reflective glass beneath the waves. The crew of these deep-sea vessels must create their own culture or risk psychosis, since they remain at sea for years at a time. A sailor must dance alone in his white metal room. Each morning the captain must assemble and play his flute to purify the air. Hence, movement is precisely determined by the information from the environment, and by the complicated interplay of material interdependencies. A painting, hung above the captain's bed, Max Ernst's School of Herring Passing Beneath a Brown Moon, tilts slightly in the rocking. It is said, after the great migrations, many stateless peasants were forced to Romanize their names. X M.S.W.

¹Peter Eleey, "Thursday," in *The Quick and the Dead*, exh. cat. (Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, 2009), 31.

²Oskar Schlemmer

I

A man must pass through his own ghost. A guest must pass through his host. To enter, the viewer must divest themselves of their flesh. — various glassware removed from local bars, clubs, galleries and houses, various global currencies, mass produced costume blood, vodka, hydrochloric acid, whiskey, acetone, salt water, motorcycle components delivered to artist in a plastic bin, cardboard boxes used to transport the exhibition, paint, dimensions variable, 2024

II

american depression — ventilation system congested with disassembled flutes to alter the air that passes through them, to inebriate any attendees, to nullify any electric field, 2024

III

Continuing an earlier proposition — clock mechanism previously dissolved in bleach, vitrine, 11 x 17 x 5, 2023-2024

IV

Proposition for Assembly — found objects from the collection of the artist with the stipulation that they must emit or collect light, electricity, or any other various fields, however broadly this may be defined. Objects include embalmed electric eel, whale oil lamp, fluorescent bulbs from the artist's previous studio, brass cow bell, lightning rod ball chamber to collect and disperse electricity, and shells for the making of fireworks. Objects were also collected from other artists, including small oil lamp on loan from David W. Norman and pigmented cast silicone gifted by Craig Jun Li, cardboard boxes used to transport the exhibition, and paint, dimensions variable, 2024

V

Unknown Orchestral Activities — found photograph after a wedding, found photograph of unknown orchestral activities, photograph on rag from *Negative Ecstasies*, found Welsh love-spoon, which is a traditional object given between betrothed couples, vitrine, 20.5 x 30.5 x 7, 2024

VI

Syntax of The Flood — clock mechanism previously dissolved in lacrimal solution (false tears formulated by the artist), vitrine, 11 x 17 x 5, 2023-2024

VII

Have we overstayed our party in the heavenly city or are we spilling through its gates trying not to get trampled? On the berm I filled a basket with crashing birds. In the dream you pointed sideways with your thumb where the cars were flying — broken anniversary clock, pelvic bone and spine from unidentified mammals found in the Sonoran desert, broken trumpets played by the artist, lacrimal solution (false tears formulated by the artist), motorcycle components, and water in prefabricated tanks, dimensions variable, 2024. Title of the piece from a poem by Elizabeth Willis.

VIII

Letter to a fish — letter written by the artist to David W. Norman concerning the work and nature of this exhibition, which he was then commissioned to transcribe into his own handwriting, ink on paper in frame, 12 x 18 x 1, 2024

IX

Preparation of a poisonous fish — for 1-2 performers in variable configurations, water, stage, and lighting, 17—41 minutes respectively, 2024

PREPARATION OF A POISONOUS FISH

Mickey, Chicago US

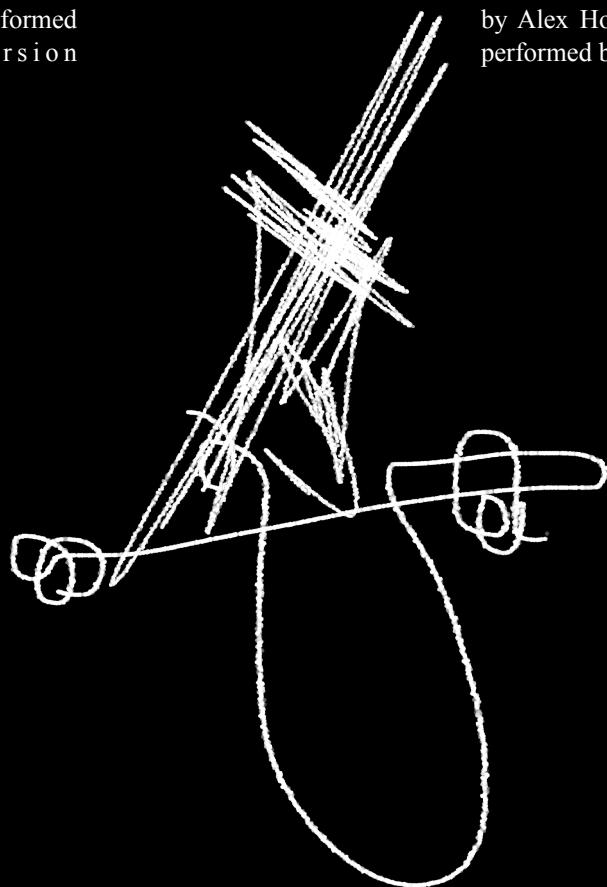
13 September, 24 October, 10 November, 2024

Preparation of a poisonous fish — for 1-2 performers in variable configurations, water, stage, and lighting, 17—41 minutes respectively

The preparation consists of cutting the fish which are still alive, avoiding piercing the liver or the reproductive organs, where the poison is stored. You can eat the outer skin when cleaned and blanched, and there is great skill involved in removing the spines: hold the skin in one hand and slice them all off with a knife in one movement. Remove the eyes. Now gut the fish. Be very precise with your knife because the ovaries and liver contain most of the poison. The performance accumulates around the spine, and is later expelled through the grammar of the hands. The idea is that the performers are, like an eel perhaps, generating an electric field.

original version performed
alternative version

by Alex Hovi and Andy Salvin,
performed by Alex Hovi



IN ANOTHER ROOM
I AM DRINKING EGGS FROM A BOOT

Pech, Vienna AT
2 October — 16 November, 2024

In Another Room I Am Drinking Eggs from a Boot

Hans Richter

What if the moon was essence of quinine
And high heels were a time of day
When certain birds bled
The chauffeur is telling the cook
The antler would pry into ice floes
Swim with a lamp
And we'd be shivering in a ditch
Biting through a black wing
There would be boats
There would be a dream country
The great quiet humming of the soul at night
The only sound is a shovel
Clearing a place for a mailbox

—Frank Stanford

"From the first smouldering taper to the elegant lanterns whose light reverberated around eighteenth-century courtyards and from the mild radiance of these lanterns to the unearthly glow of the sodium lamps that line the Belgian motorways, it has all been combustion. Combustion is the hidden principle behind every artefact we create. The making of a fish-hook, manufacture of a china cup, or production of a television programme, all depend on the same process of combustion. Like our bodies and like our desires, the machines we have devised are possessed of a heart which is slowly reduced to embers. From the earliest times, human civilization has been no more than a strange luminescence growing more intense by the hour, of which no one can say when it will begin to wane and when it will fade away. For the time being, our cities still shine through the night, and the fire still spreads." —W.G. Sebald from *The Rings of Saturn*

In Another Room I Am Drinking Eggs From a Boot is the final and paraphrasal installment in a series of exhibitions that began in February of 2024, including Negative Ecstasies, all fish in the night become birds, and Civilization of Happiness. All three prior exhibitions and performances are somehow reflected here in Vienna: lights removed from the ceiling formally relate to previous work staged in Pittsburgh, creating a tone-poem of absence. The sound installation features original choral and musical compositions performed and recorded in Chicago, as well as propositions for what could be called impossible performances. The benches, once part of a church in Lower Austria, are an idea that was edited out of another exhibition, but are here charged with all the energy of their provenance. The exhibition, titled after the eponymous poem by Frank Stanford, I consider to be the most dancerly of three sisters, all philosophical and exuberant in their self-decimating nature. Their work is meant to linger only slightly, on the practice of movement, legibility, post-industrial metaphysics, language, the possible, and the low glow of air before fading away. X M.S.W.

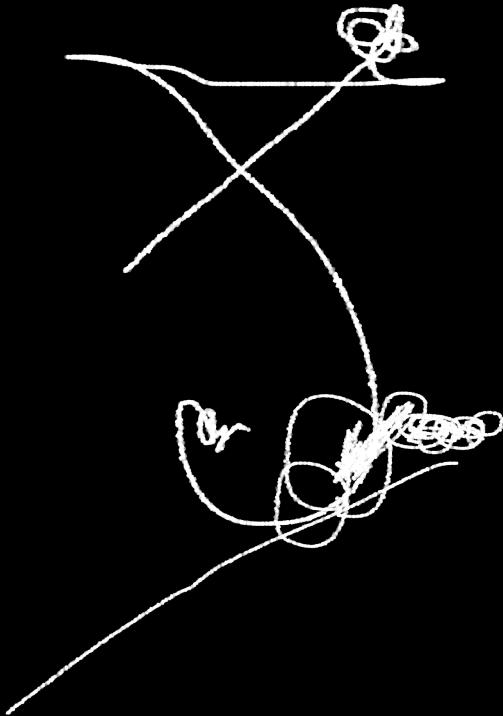
I

Music for Assembly — Two channel sound installation (24m01s), the box pro Achat 204 WH speakers, church pews ca. 1750, dimensions variable, 2024

II

Music for the fluorescent lamps of Europe, — Performance object. The gallery's lights are removed for the duration of the exhibition, tied in a bundle with violin string, and placed on pews, dimensions variable, 2024

Major thanks to Bruno Mokross for realizing the installation of this exhibition.



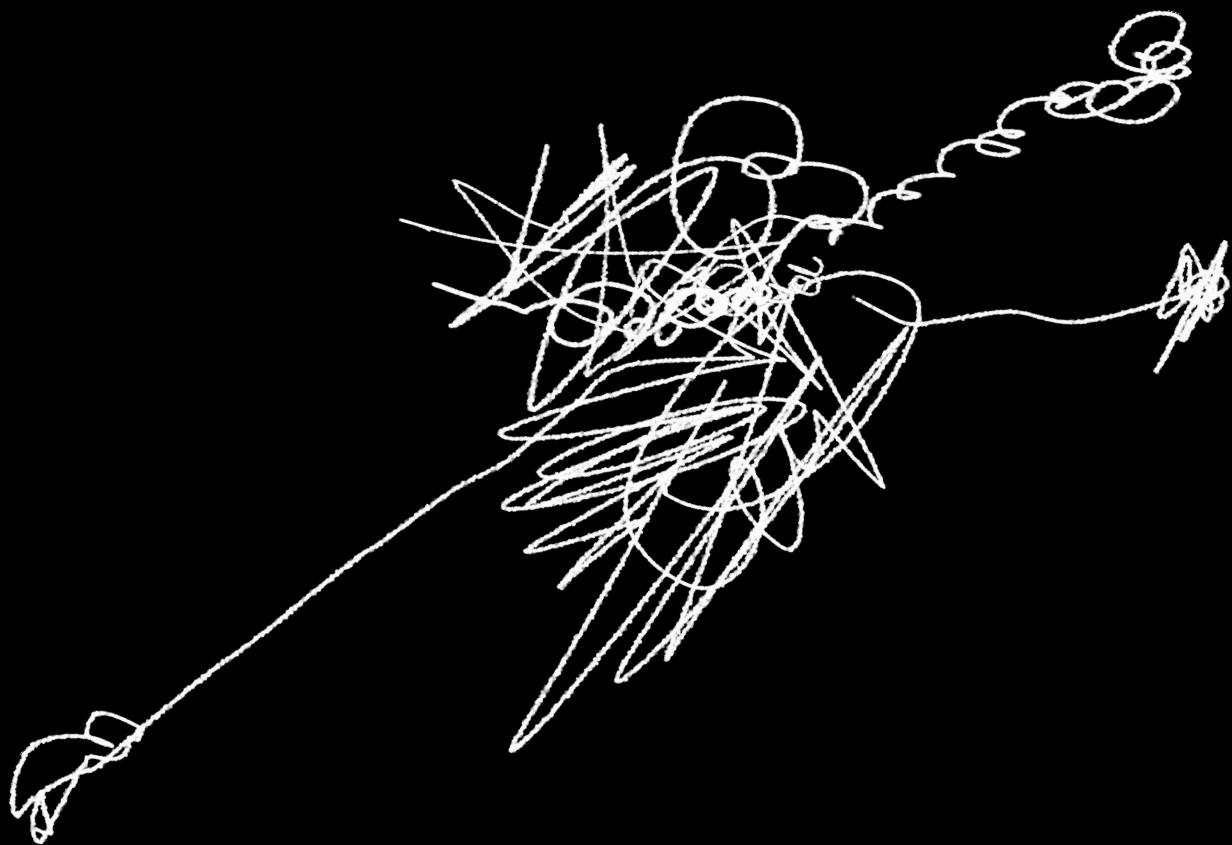
THERE DOES NOT EXIST

Gray Center for Arts and Inquiry, at the University of Chicago, Chicago US
12 February, 2025

The Non-Aligned Movement was founded in 1961 with the view to advancing interests of developing countries in the context of Cold War confrontation. In its first three decades, the Movement played a crucial role in decolonization, formation of new independent states, and democratization of international relations. At present, the NAM consists of 121 States that account for about 60% of the United Nations overall membership. Observer status in the NAM has been provided to 17 states and 10 organizations. The Non-Aligned Movement aspires to occupy a niche of a political gathering that seeks to oppose West's unilateral approaches and actions on the global stage. NAM builds its work on ten Bandung principles, including: respect for the sovereignty, equality and territorial integrity of all states; rejection of the possibility of an unconstitutional change of government, as well as external attempts to change the regime of government; the preservation of the inalienable right for each state to be free, without interference from outside, to determine its political, social, economic and cultural system; refusal from aggression and direct or indirect use of force; non-application of any unilateral economic, political or military measures. The functioning of the NAM is organized without any formal administrative structures and without a budget.

There are a multitude of vectors through which I began to approach There Does Not Exist, though none are necessarily fixed or required for experiencing the work. The first is what David Graver has called “the aesthetics of disturbance” vis à vis his analysis of the early experimental theater of Roussel, Benn, Vitrac, Lewis, and Kokoschka. In his analysis Graver outlines the early avant-garde playwright's antagonism toward established subject-object norms and how this disturbance, both cognitively and relationally, implodes the internal logic of “the thing” and the external logic of “its relation to other things”. This antagonism was quickly lost in the plastic arts of, say, Duchamp, when institutions recuperated the antagonistic objects of the avantgarde, Dada, surrealism, conceptualism etc, whereas the recuperation of action is, due to its immediacy and evanescence, much more difficult. Another vector I am interested in is the lineage of aleatory music, or chance operations in general. Specifically the idea that both the musical and movement based elements of the work are simultaneously composed (i.e. predetermined) and improvisational, that is, that the work unfolds stochastically within a bounded system. The semi-devised nature of this work allows for degradation in traditional creative authority while socially expanding the process. Another vector of this work is my interest in microtones, which have been largely theorized in sound and music but less so, if at all, in dance and performance. It is my stance that, if more classical positions are grand and epic, then microtonal positions are lyric, deflated, and exploit the figural immediacy and irregularities of the organism and its ability to move. Movement of the human body has been classically theorized as “chords in space”, but in the highly formal context of the trained professional. From Nuryev to the Bauhaus, to Martha Graham, Merce Cunningham, Trisha Brown, Noa Eshkol, Yvonne Rainer and Pina Bausch, most dance up until now, however experimental, has been extremely technical and practiced. My practice of microtonal movement, as it derives directly from music theory, is that there is a literal aesthetic frequency, accessible to the moving body, that exists between classical, harmonious, purely intoned notes, that is, positions. These movements are built around ideas of subtraction, exhaustion, negation, physical impairment and unprofessionalism, and are my attempt to transgress post-modern norms while not descending into the “weirdness for its own sake”. Nor did I wish to sacrifice the power of image making. I am most interested in this collapse of genre that occurs when the process and its object are unfixed, e.g., the generative collapse of film, music, stagecraft, performance, and sculpture into each other. X M.S.W.

Performed & devised by Erin E. Lynch, Gasira Timir, Havadine Stone, Kaylyn Carter, & Kira Scerbin. Scored, directed, and produced by Micah Schippa-Wildfong.



PEOPLE ARE GLORIOUS

Triangolo, off site at Chiesa di San Luca, Cremona IT
May 17 — August 2, 2025

It must involve the destruction of civilian property. It must resist the intelligence agency almost successfully. It must be difficult to photograph. It must entail a private morphology of needle and cone. These are some criteria for stage design.¹

PARLIAMENTS OF THE LIVING

This exhibition is a film in which all the actors have no lines and must navigate their relationships through context clues and environmental storytelling. What I have done to promote the film is hire, on every block of the city, a man (in the gender neutral sense), to stand ominously at his own window, turning off and on again at varying, unnerving intervals, a single lamp, roughly equal to the actor's height.

(scene in which the theater destroys itself for no other reason than it must be empty)

If but one drop of how I feel were to have fallen upon him
it would lay waste all surrounding symbols, as one might become waste in the intestines of the
sculptures, which are themselves merely a mechanism by which grief is turned
voluminous. If
but one drop of how I feel were to have fallen into Hell at that moment
it would henceforth be transformed
into Paradise.

*How can we be neither living (client or agent of this whorehouse-world), nor dead (or too quickly
lethal, particularly for oneself)? Proletarian gnosis offers a solution to this problem: be a living-
suicide. A saint without any glory except some ravaged intensity much like the sovereign in his act
of being. Go to the sea.²*

EVEN THE DOGS HERE SING

I am paraphrasing Emil Cioran paraphrasing Catherine of Genoa on paradise, Hell, and transformation, but this is only noteworthy as it bears structural relevance to the spirit of iterative mutation, sublimation, the supposed Proletarian gnosis, and the desire for annihilation present in this body of work. I wished to dissociate from my past, since dissociation and destruction are hallmarks of the contemporary, not fully obliterating it, but to constantly restage it. It shouldn't be lost, then, that the context of this exhibition taking place in a bygone cinema, is here engaged prosaically with the complexities of the work in relation to the exhibition site, while divesting from the romantic enclosure of exposition, assignation, identity and its statehood. Not to create a religion of one, but to create a symbolic disorder, or a symbolic foil stretched over the process; a private morphology of needle and cone, legible only itinerantly.

I realize now that the work I have undertaken since this restructuring of my inner and outer lives has been a sort of musical fugue enacted on the field of the mind; an iterative cycle where each previous idea feeds into the next, transforming it, informing its structure and predicting its variations. People Are Glorious is the next movement in that cycle, and takes on many previous ghosts in this reflexive process. The lights, which have been programmed to power on and off at various intervals, acted as cadaverous substitutes for traditional metronomes in *There Does Not Exist*, a microtonal piece of spatialized choral work devised for 5 vocalists and performed earlier this year in Chicago. The church pew is a continuation of an idea first presented in Vienna in 2024, engaging with the weighted provenance of liturgical objects in relation to performance and collectivity, but here it has been outfitted with a pneumatic device typically used in automating the doors of haunted houses. The various timekeeping mechanisms that have been dissolved in false

tears and stomach acid come from the paranoid schizophrenic collection of my grandfather, who amassed enormous amounts of strange and broken objects, presumably as a salve to his condition. The clarinets were found at an abandoned school not far from my studio; I think of the way the air from their lungs and the saliva from their mouths interacted with the objects, how the world changed around these dormant, forgotten things, like the found Stradivarius violins I have previously used in my work, which eerily precedes and reverberates with the context of this exhibition taking place in Cremona. But also the history of the space itself, its previous life as Cinema San Luca, and the spectral echoes of Derrida's theory of haunted ontology therein. In this regard, the new site sensitive works for this exhibition engage with the broken instrument and machine parts leaking false tears, which I manufacture myself, that contain the heavy metal compounds from the objects they originally destroyed. I have also ingested a photograph of my partner performing *Preparation of a poisonous fish*, a performance that debuted late 2024, collecting the resulting liquid my body expels as waste. These works are, in this way, my attempt to access the uncanny and the uncomfortable and to "turn grief voluminous". Is it possible that to put something inside an exhibition is a way of passing through it, the way the photograph passes through my digestive system, emerging on the other side as something new or, preferably, topologically unrecognizable. X M.S.W.

¹Lerner, Ben, et al. *The Snows of Venice*. Spector Books, 2018.

²Gilles Grelet, source unknown

I

Parliaments of the living — lights collected from various locations of purpose, each set to an automatic incremental timer, dimensions variable, 2024/2025

II

the host / Music for Assembly— church pew gifted from Chiesa di San Luca, electronic motion pounder, prop control motion trigger, 145cm x 79cm x 93cm, 2025

III

CHOIR OF MAN / Parliaments of Stone I, II, & III — materials not listed, 50cm x 12cm x 9cm/ 67cm x 12cm x 9cm/108cm x 12cm 9cm, 2025

IV

First chamber of the house / the administration of plurals — clock mechanism from the collection of my grandfather previously dissolved in lacrimal solution (false tears formulated by the artist), various musical components, antique player piano sheet music cases, enamel, display cabinet, 151cm x 35cm x 32cm, 2022/2023/2025

V

Second chamber of the house / the administration of plurals— clock mechanism from the collection of my grandfather previously destroyed in a fire, found clarinets, plastic tubing with lacrimal solution, photograph of Alex Hovi performing "Preparation of a poisonous fish", display cabinet, 151cm x 35cm x 32cm, 2022/2023/2025

VI

The digestive qualities of photography and performance / the pain / of others is a weapon of great skill / and pleasure — photograph of Alex Hovi performing "Preparation of a poisonous fish" ingested by the artist, the resulting urine of which was then collected in vials, vitrine, 26cm x 26cm x 26cm, 2025

LIBERTÉ

Twelve Ten, Chicago US
February 21 — March 28, 2026

“What is the price of two sparrows—one copper coin? But not a single sparrow can fall to the ground without your Father knowing it.” — Matthew 10:29

“In my dream I am hiding in a basement full of doves in cages, waiting for the woman upstairs, whom I do not know, to leave.” — Micah Schippa-Wildfong

18th century experiments with electricity produced a technique that jolted dead tissue, causing contractions and convulsions in the bodies it was applied to. Named “Galvanism” for Luigi Galvani, who observed the phenomena early in frogs, his nephew would go on to popularize the method, presenting the quivering cadavers of criminals to shocked audiences.

In *Abolishing Freedom*, a series of essays on free-will and fatalism, Frank Ruda relays that “[Martin] Luther gave one of the most inhuman, charming definitions of the human being as a piece of shit that fell out of God’s anus. Mankind has an excremental status. The world is but a gigantic latrine. [...] Against any trivializations of God’s decisions, against any attempt to mine meaning out of them, Luther defends the knowledge that something unknowable, unthinkable is at work in us.”

A stuttering élan vital drives the behemoth that is the American national body, a Frankenstein corpse sutured of rotting industrial cores, hollowed-out small-towns and hyper-capitalized data-centers; experts warn that the U.S. power grid, an infrastructure over one-hundred years old, and riven by neglect, regulatory and investment failures, has been pushed to the breaking point by the demands of new technologies and the climate crisis.

Franz Neumann’s Behemoth, a 1942 critical diagnostic of the Nazi regime, contrasted the structure of the fascist state with that of Hobbes’ Leviathan. If the leviathan is a centralized state governed by a domineering social contract, then the behemoth is a chaotic association of cartels and power-brokers maintaining a shambolic zombie-state governed by self-interest and irrationality.

Winters in the mid-west are now more frequently accompanied by bouts of polar vortexes, large low-pressure air masses which transform the city into a bleak icy wasteland, crippling infrastructure and threatening hypothermia. Temperatures may turn to such frigid extremes that migrating birds freeze and fall from the sky.



I

american sleep — lights collected from various locations of purpose, each set to an automatic incremental timer, dimensions variable, 2024/2025

II

the exhaustion of the universal friend — 4L Automatic Terrarium Fogger filled with light bulbs removed from abandoned buildings, found clarinet components, glass, wax, clock movement mechanism, metronome mechanism dissolved in lacrimal solution (false tears formulated by the artist)

III

Letter to whichever leader will listen — taxidermy dove, handwritten letter, ribbon

IV

Untitled — found wooden industrial pulley, odd/even number brass clock winding key

V

Untitled — modified found alarm clock, wax

VI

Untitled — clock movement mechanism previously dissolved in lacrimal solution (false tears formulated by the artist)

